

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 03898 140723Z

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INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 3898

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, LE, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH LEBANESE AMBASSADOR

1. I TALKED TODAY WITH LEBANESE AMBASSADRO SLOH WHO HAS RETURNED FROM A STAY OF SEVERAL WEEKS IN BEIRUT, USUALLY THESE TALKS ARE NOT PRODUCTIVE OF VERY MUCH, BUT TODAY HE PASSED ON A NUMBER OF ITEMS OF INFORMATION AND OPINION WHICH I FORWARD FOR WHATEVER CONTRIBUTION THEY MAY MAKE TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEIRUT SCENE. I APOLOGIZE IF THEY ARE DUPLICATORY OF MATERIAL ALREADY COVERED BY EMBASSY BEIRUT AND OF COURSE WOULD WELCOME BEIRUT COMMENTS WHICH MIGHT SET THE FOLLOWING IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

2. SOLH MENTIONED THAT HE HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT FRANGIE, FRANGIE WAS PARTICULARLY EXCITED AND IRRITATED ABOUT LIBYAN INTERFERENCE. SOLH ASID FRANGIE TOLD HIM AND ALSO OTHER ARAB AMBASSADORS IN BEIRUT THAT HE HAD TAPE RECORDING OF APPARENTLY A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION IN WHICH QADDAFI ASKS ARAFAT TO TURN LEBANON INTO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 AMMAN 03898 140723Z

A "POOL OF BLOOD." FRANGIE ALSO CLAIMED TO HAVE

PHOTOSTATIC COPIES OF TWO LIBYAN CHECKS IN FAVOR OF LIBYAN EMBASSY IN BEIRUT, ONE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$35M SOME MONTHS AGO, AND A MORE RECENT ONE FOR \$2M. SOLH SAYS THAT LIBYA'S PRIMARY SUPPORT GOES TO PPS (PARTIE POPULAIRE SYRIEN) WHICH HE CLAIMS IS SOURCE OF CONTINUING SNIPER ACTIVITY IN BEIRUT.

3. SOLH, WHO SAYS HE HAS GOOD CONNECTIONS WITH IRAQIS IN JORDAN, CLAIMS IRAQIS ARE ALSO MEDDLING BY FUNDING AND DIRECTING JUMBLATT, LEBANESE COMMUNISTS, AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST FRONT. NEW IRAQI HEAD OF OFFICE TO BE OPENED IN PORT OF AQABA TO EXPEDITE SHIPMENTS OF IRAQI CARGOES TOLD SOLH OPENLY THAT IRAQIS HAD DUTY TO SUPPORT PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS IN LEBANON, AND WAS UNCONCERNED ABOUT FACT THAT HE WAS TELLING THIS TO THE LEBANESE AMBASSADOR.

4. SOLH GAVE ME HIS ASSESSMENT THAT KARAMI WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT FOR AT LEAST A MONTH OR TWO AND THAT IN PART THIS WAS ACQUIESCENCE IN A GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD EFFORT TO PERMIT GOVERNMENT OF MILITARY OFFICERS TO CONTINUE TO ATTEMPT TO CONTROL DEVELOPMENTS FROM THEIR PRESENT CARETAKER STATUS. HE DID STATE THAT GENERAL GHANEM DID NOT SEEM TO BE VERY MUCH IN CHARGE OF AFFAIRS, INDICATED HE WAS NOT VERY POLITICALLY ASTUTE, AND SAID THAT ARMY WAS CONTINUING QUIETLY TO TRANSFER MEN AND VEHICLES FROM ARMY TO GENDARMERIE WHERE THEY WERE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO PUBLIC IN CONTROLLING OR ATTEMPTING TO CONTROL INCIDENTS. HE SAID THAT AFTER A MONTH OR TWO IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GET JUMBLATT AND THE PHALANGE TO AGREE TO JOIN IN SAME GOVERNMENT.

5. ON SYRIA, HE SAID THAT THE SHORT-TERM SYRIAN OBJECTIVES WERE HELPFUL IN COOLING, OR ATTEMPTING TO COOL, THE SITUATION. OVER THE LONG RUN, HE FELT THAT THE SYRIANS WANTED TO "MONACO-IZE" LEBANON AND MAKE IT AN ONLY SLIGHTLY INDEPENDENT FIEFDOM OF SYRIA. IN THE INTERIM, THEY WANTED TO PREVENT ANY SUCCESSFUL MILITARY EFFORTS AGAINST THE PLO AND THEIR LEBANESE SUPPORTERS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 AMMAN 03898 140723Z

6. SOLH SAYS THIS IS THE WORST HE HAS SEEN THE LEBANESE SITUATION IN HIS LIFETIME. HE FEELS THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WHICH CAN PREVENT THE OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING AGAIN EITHER AS A RESULT OF INTENTIONAL EFFOTS BY ONE OR THE OTHER OF THE ARMED PARTIES, OR THROUGH SOME INADVERTENCE OR ACCIDENT. HE SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER RIFAI HAD OFFERED JORDANIAN HELP FOR

LEBANON, IMPLYING THAT SOME SORT OF MILITARY ASSISTNACE WAS WHAT RIFAI HAD IN MIND. HE ASKED WHAT I THOUGHT JORDAN COULD DO. I REPLIED THIS WAS REALLY A QUESTION FOR LEBANON AND JORDAN TO LOOK AT. ON THE ONE HAND, THE PLO AND JUMBLATT AND OTHERS WERE TRYING TO MAKE HAY OUT OF ALLEGED MILITARY SUPPORT CONNECTIONS BETWEEN JORDAN, THE ISRAELIS AND THE PHALANGE. THE NEW JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR SEEMED TO BE SPENDING A LOT OF HIS TIME DENYING THIS. ON THE OTHER HAND, JORDAN HAD AN EFFICIENT MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND ITS TRAINING COURSES HAD BEEN USEFUL TO ARAB MILITARY FROM ALL OVER THE AREA. SOLH SAID HE RECOGNIZED THE POTENTIAL DILEMMAS AND INDICATED THAT THE LEGANESE HAD HAD SOME OF THEIR MILITARY HERE FOR TRAINING FOR SOME TIME.

7. FINALLY, SOLH INDICATED A GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SHIA COMMUNITY. WHILE LAST YEAR THEY HAD OPPOSED THE FEDAYEEN IN SOUTH LEBANON BECAUSE OF THE TROUBLE THE FEDAYEEN HAD STIRRED UP WITH THE ISRAELIS IN THE MIDDLE OF WHICH THE SHIA HAD BEEN CAUGHT, NOW HE SAID THEY ARE EITHER PRO-FEDAYEEN, LEFTISTS OR CRIMINALS, OR ALL THREE. HE HAD RECENTLY DISCUSSED WITH CLOSE IRANIAN FRIENDS DURING A VISIT TO TEHRAN INCREASED IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR THE SHIA IN LEBANON IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THEIR ECONOMIC POSITION AND HOPEFULLY TURN THEM FROM CRIMINALITY, COMMUNISM, OR PRO-PALESTINIANISM. THUS FAR NOTHING HAD HAPPENED FROM IRAN AND HE CRITICIZED THE LEBANESE LEADERSHIP FOR NOT TAKING A MORE SYMPATHETIC AND ENLIGHTENED LOOK AT THE NEED TO ASSIST THE SHIA COMMUNITY WHICH HAD HAD THE CAPACITY IN THE PAST TO BE HELPFUL TO CHRISTIANS AND MIDDLE-OF-ROAD SUNNI MOSLEMS IN PRESERVING AN INDEPENDENT AND BALANCED

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PAGE 04 AMMAN 03898 140723Z

LEBANON.
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